

What Jail Administrators Can Learn from Community Policing

TWO RECENT INITIATIVES

have revolutionized law enforcement in the United States-community policing, and a demand for increased accountability on the part of administrators. Crime rates are dropping, citizens feel safer, and police officers are excited about their seemingly new "power" over previously overwhelming social problems that breed crime and decimate neighborhoods.

What can local jail administrators learn from these phenomena? In the Broward Sheriff's Office (BSO), the Corrections Accountability Initiative is designed to apply what we have learned from the community policing side of the house to creating a Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation that is ready for the year 2000 and beyond.

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY

policing programs have several common themes:

- Analyzing data to develop operational plans;
- Empowering line staff,

- Identifying issues important to the community;
- Revamping all department functions to support community policing; and
- Making top-level managers accountable.

Although these are seemingly common-sense approaches, the way an agency mixes these elements means the difference between lip service and real results. No longer do police administrators get to shrug their shoulders when responding to the hard questions in their community. We now hold them accountable for the increasing incidence of domestic violence, auto thefts, and daytime residential burglaries. We also expect them to be accountable for sick leave abuse by their staff, their agency's overtime budget, their attendance at community meetings, and for knowing exactly what is going on in the neighborhoods.

One way to tell that a police department is not serious about community policing initiatives is if it has designated an officer or two on a shift as its "community policing officers." In successful models, *all* officers are

oriented to community officers are expected to figure out what is going on in their communities and to have a stake in prevention, investigation, and community relations.

Commanders are held accountable, and they know that their

bosses will review whether they did or did not follow up on a community issue. They know that their solution to a problem cannot be simply throwing more staff resources at it. ("Our solution, Major, is to add another unit to the area and wait for the burglary call.") Commanders' career advancement will be based on their ability to be responsive to their superiors, the community, and the officers who work for them-and to get results.

All this may be too much for some senior police administrators, whom we raised in the profession with the notion that they are only responsible for responding to crime, not really for preventing it. While they cheerfully take credit when crime goes down, they hand out plenty of blame when crime goes up.

SO, WHAT CAN LOCAL JAIL administrators learn from these two initiatives-community policing and accountability? Plenty. If we don't learn from our policing colleagues, we will continue to run departments that make progress at a snail's pace, "solve" the same problem over and over again, get things done in spite of line staff and managers, and continually butt heads with county commissions, city councils, and taxpayers who don't care

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much what happens to the local jail system.

The elements of a successful community policing program relate directly to jails. Jail administrators must take similar steps as their counterparts in law enforcement to improve operations.

Every hour in a local jail brings another crisis. Managers deal with 24 hours of demands that stretch imagination, staff, and patience. The last thing we think we can do is to stop and analyze a problem before we set about solving it. "Solving" it often means just getting through the shift without a repeat of the event-and hoping for a better tomorrow.

Our new approach must be to gather and analyze data about what is happening in the jail before we arrive at the solutions. Although planning and research units are common in police departments, they are rare in jail environments.

Research units may seem extravagant in times when budgets are at issue, but the resources wasted in *not* solving a problem are more than just fiscal resources. The jail administrator who is seen as being able only to put out the fires each day engenders little confidence from line staff. More importantly, this management style is a bad role model for mid- and top-level managers, and, ultimately, it hurts our ability to cope in the future.

Every jail has data to help solve problems. Just as our colleagues in community policing work to identify the *modus operandi* of the residential burglar, the time of day crimes tend to occur, and the address of those recently released from prison, so too do jail administrators have useful data available to them.

We know that the jail environment-as measured by incidents, disciplinary reports, inmate grievances, sick leave use on each shift, and inmate vandalism in housing units-provides the clues we need to solve problems, and for longer than the next 8 hours. We have the data, but we have not often figured out what it is telling us about line staff, supervisors, or inmates.

STEP 2: Empowering line staff involves giving them a clear understanding of their role in managing the jail. The limits of their authority and responsibility need to be clearly defined. The barrier to this '90s management approach is supervisors who feel threatened by sharing their power. These same supervisors may be unable to manage staff who are using discretion within parameters to get to measurable objectives. Supervisors need to become the problem analyzers and the option evaluators. They must be able to exhibit new management behaviors while still reaching measurable objectives.

As we cannot simply get all new supervisors on board when we move toward a new management philosophy, we must empower the current supervisors

and managers before empowering the line staff.

STEP 3: Who is the "community" in the jail setting? Identify Issues Important to the Community The community can be the inmates, the staff, or the taxpayers. In reality, the ways problems are analyzed, plans developed, and successes measured are all in the eyes of the "community."

Community policing programs that are results-oriented solve the problems that are of urgent concern to their constituents-not those that seem important to the police department. What is important to the police department and the community are often polar opposites. Again, communication and analysis are the keys.

How often have we solved a problem, only to find out that the solution was of no interest to anyone but us? For example, we may work to develop inmate rules of conduct designed to reinforce positive inmate behavior, only to find out that the inmates' concern was the consistency with which discipline was being applied. That is, they had no problem-or almost no problem-with the rules themselves. We didn't listen to that community.

We can come up with the same scenarios for solutions to staff concerns. Often, what staff want is to have the elevators work and for someone in administration to "listen" to them. Complex and expensive solu-

tions are not necessary; we just need to do the basic research.

Taxpayers are the least sophisticated segment of this trilogy. Our citizens unfortunately understand so little about what we do that their expectations of us are too low. We can dazzle the taxpayers with our impressive range of inmate programs, our ACA accreditation, our inmate work crews saving money on community projects, or our results-oriented management, and then find that taxpayers only want a low-cost, no-frills jail-with no cable TV. In developing outreach to the community or an effective public education program, listening is essential.

STEP 4: Revamp All Department Functions to support Results

Results-oriented management requires a support structure within the department that has, as its only mission, making things happen. This

means that operational functions don't wait for computer equipment, programming and software, staff, or training. The internal bureaucracy that develops and thrives in large agencies often has as its goals its own growth, priorities, and schedules-whether or not these coincide with the department's operational goals.

All administrative functions, including purchasing, payroll, and recruitment, have to be held accountable for holding up progress elsewhere in the department. These administrative functions are often the most difficult to change.

STEP 5: Hold Top Managers Accountable

What separates the excellent agencies from those just going through the motions is the degree to which their managers are held accountable. In the frantic world of jail management, follow-up with managers is frequently based on who has the best memory. Often managers have told me that they were waiting to see if I would remember asking them to do a task before actually beginning the task.

The New York City Police Department's model of grilling its precinct chiefs about what goes on in their commands provides one end of the scale of accountability. The jobs of these chiefs often hang in limbo until their next "performance" before the "big bosses." In one sense, this kind of accountability is what we preach in child rearing: set the expectations, and provide frequent feedback. There is nothing like deadlines and consequences to spur managers to a higher level of performance.

BROWARD COUNTY WILL launch its Corrections Accountability Initiative (CAI) in the BSO Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in the coming months. The initiative parallels the POWERTRAC program underway in the BSO Department of Law Enforcement, which is modeled after New York City's COMSTAT approach.

POWERTRAC is monitored by a board that includes the Sheriff, the Chief of Staff, the Inspector General, the Commander of the Department of Law Enforcement, and the four majors

who oversee all operations. The effort is supported by five crime analysts and two lieutenants in charge of managing the process from week to week. All district commanders know they will face the POWERTRAC board every 5 weeks, without fail. No one forgets the issues raised in the previous session, and answers are expected.

As the POWERTRAC program reaches its first birthday, there are patrol zones in which the crime rate has dropped substantially (to nothing in some), the community is involved and thrilled with the new neighborhoods, and some commanders face early retirement.

The CAI approach will initially cause sleepless nights for managers and line staff. The secret of success for top managers, whom the system will hold accountable, is holding their subordinates accountable. This sounds simple, but how can it work in an environment in which we often don't have time for lunch?

Back to the issue of empowering staff and managers: the circle is complete. Line staff and managers will have to help administrators respond to the new results-oriented management requirements. This means they must answer tough questions. The administrator must address these points not only initially, but also every time she/he appears before the "big bosses." No longer acceptable are answers such as, "The purchase order for the new kitchen floor is somewhere in purchasing," or "Training is behind because the academy didn't send me the updated list of who needed

“TOUGH QUESTIONS” IN ADMINISTRATOR ACCOUNTABILITY-

- **Budget-How** is each facility or operational area meeting its budget for operations, personnel, capital, and overtime?
- **Personnel issues-How** is each facility or operational area managing sick leave, vacancies, employee grievances, relationship with bargaining unit(s), staff disciplinary reports, training hours, staff commendations, outcomes of appealed discipline, staff morale issues. and related matters?
- **Inmate issues-How** is each facility or operational area managing inmate grievances and inmate disciplinary procedures? (For example, how often are reports allowed to expire?) How are they reviewing the numbers in such areas as types of inmate programs, numbers of inmates attending, status of grant-funded programs, use of force reports, and inmate welfare issues?
- **Accreditation/policy compliance-How** is each facility or operational area managing its written directive system, training staff on new or revised procedures, using roll call time, preparing for re-accreditation, documenting files, briefing staff, and cooperating with the central policy planning office?
- **Coordination issues-How** is each jail facility or operational area coordinating with the Department of Law Enforcement, including attending community council meetings? How are areas of mutual concern surfaced and solved, and how are joint or special operations managed?
- **Security issues-How** is each facility or operational area managing special security issues, security inspections, shakedowns, inmate crowding, use of stun guns and shields, and special and/or high-security inmates?

Sheriff's Office issues-What administrative support does each facility or operational area need from BSO, in areas such as human resources, training, and information services, in order to fulfill its mission?

training,” or “We had a few people on vacation so we decided to close down inmate programs.”

The board setting ensures accountability throughout the agency. When an issue is reviewed, it is easy to determine when any coordination was requested and the status of the help. The board setting also provides each manager with an opportunity to present new initiatives or programs designed to improve operations, save money, improve staff morale, and/or improve public safety.

The administrator must have a coherent and workable action plan to address all problem areas. The plan must make individuals accountable for completing the tasks, meeting due dates, and achieving measurable outcomes. Elements of the plan may go astray, but the credibility of the plan itself must be sound. As long as the administrator is making progress and not allowing forward movement to be inappropriately sidetracked, the evaluation of his/her work performance will be positive.

CAI IS INTENDED TO MAKE the overall department function in a way that makes all employees part of its success. Managers will have a chance to demonstrate that they can analyze data and solve problems rather than just pass problems along, can learn from their subordinates, and can hold department support functions equally accountable for getting their jobs done.

Stay tuned-we'll see if Broward County can really make this leap into the next century.